WORDS TO LIVE BY

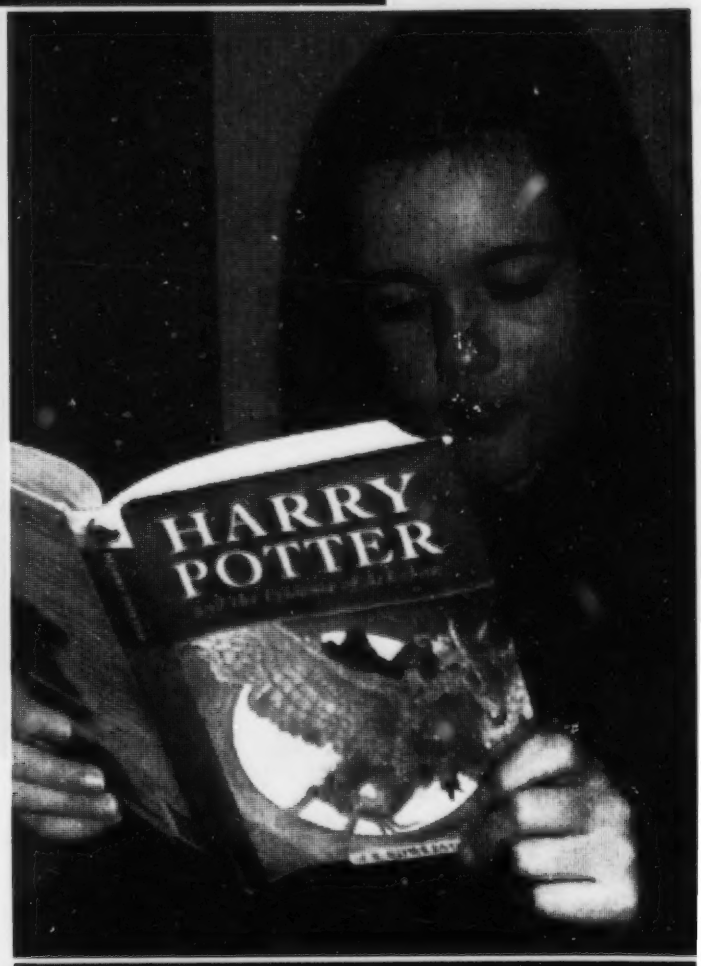
A **Strategic**

Literacy Plan for

Newfoundland

and **Labrador**

2000



GOVERNMENT OF
NEWFOUNDLAND
AND LABRADOR
Department of Education

Honourable Judy M. Foote, Minister

Foreword

With the release of this Strategic Literacy Plan, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is renewing its commitment to improve literacy within the province, with the ultimate goal being to achieve literacy levels comparable to those in the rest of Canada. The plan was developed through consultation with literacy stakeholders and with the recognition that there is an essential link between literacy and social and economic development.

The Honourable Judy M. Foote

Literacy levels are lower in Newfoundland and Labrador than they are in other provinces. Thirty-nine per cent of our population aged 25 years and over has less than a high school education compared to 28 per cent of the same age group for all of Canada. While literacy levels have improved in recent years, more work needs to be done if the people of our province are to achieve literacy levels comparable to those of other provinces and the world.

Since Confederation, we have made great progress in our province. Over the past decade, full-time enrolment in post-secondary studies increased 46 per cent. Eighty per cent of our high school graduates go on to post-secondary education; 62 per cent go to university. The increase in the proportion of our population with a college certificate or diploma or university degree is remarkable. Since we know social well-being and economic prosperity are linked to educational levels of the population, these statistics bode well for our province in the future. We must work together to ensure this level of progress continues.

I offer my sincere thanks to the Literacy Strategic Planning Steering Committee for their efforts in conducting the consultation process and preparing the report which provided the foundation for this Plan.

The Strategic Literacy Plan provides the framework we need for all partners – children, families, learners, educators, volunteers, community groups, educational institutions, and government – to work together for the continued improvement of literacy in the province. Investment in literacy development is an investment in our people and in our future.

Judy M. Foote
Minister of Education

Our Vision

Our vision for Newfoundland and Labrador is of a society in which all people can read and write, and where literacy is valued and understood as contributing to personal, social and economic development.

Our Beliefs

We believe:

- *education is both an individual right and a public responsibility and literacy is key to education;*
- *education and literacy are key to social and economic development;*
- *literacy is important for people of all ages;*
- *literacy is a key indicator of the health and well-being of individuals and families;*
- *a society must challenge its people to achieve the highest literacy levels possible;*
- *literacy is best achieved through an active partnership involving individuals, families, communities and governments;*
- *in promoting and valuing a culture of literacy*

Our Goals

Literacy levels which are among the highest in Canada

A culture which values literacy as a desirable goal for all people

An integrated approach to literacy development

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"Our vision for Newfoundland and Labrador is of a healthy, educated, distinctive, self-reliant and prosperous people living in vibrant, supportive communities within sustainable regions."

Strategic Social Plan, 1998

Chapter 1

Introduction

- Why a New Plan for Literacy is Important
- Development of the Strategic Literacy Plan
- The Link with Government's Strategic Plans

Introduction

Why a New Plan for Literacy is Important

The value in strategic planning lies in its systematic approach in dealing with present realities and future uncertainties. It focuses efforts and resources on long-term objectives and yet provides a foundation for short-term activities. In other words, strategic planning provides a framework for action.

Literacy is important to society for many reasons. While its link to increased access to employment is obvious, literacy is also important because it contributes to citizenship and participation in the democratic process, has an impact on health and well-being, and leads to personal fulfilment.

The demands for higher literacy levels are ever increasing, and the consequences for those who fall short are more serious than ever before. It is critical that graduates of our school system can read well, especially in an increasingly competitive and technological economy.

Literacy levels are lower in Newfoundland and Labrador than they are in other provinces. According to Statistics Canada, 39 per cent of our population aged 25 years and over has less than a high school education compared to 28 per cent of the same age group for all of Canada. While literacy levels have improved in recent years, more work needs to be done if the people of our province are to achieve literacy levels comparable to those of other provinces and the world.

Coordination and integration of existing efforts of individuals, volunteers, governments and delivery agencies will be necessary in order to improve literacy

levels. This document describes a strategic plan for literacy development in this province.

Development of the Strategic Literacy Plan

In January 1998, Government announced its intention to develop a ***Strategic Literacy Plan*** for Newfoundland and Labrador. This plan was developed through consultation with literacy stakeholders to improve literacy within the province and to ensure the most effective and efficient use of resources. The plan addresses literacy for all ages, bothwithin and outside the formal education system.

A Literacy Strategic Planning Unit was established to oversee the development and implementation of the plan. A Steering Committee was created to ensure broad-based stakeholder input. A Consultation Paper and Workbook were prepared to help guide discussions during a province-wide public consultation process. Input was gathered from a variety of stakeholders including learners, volunteers, educators, community agencies, the Literacy

Development Council, as well as representatives of industry, labour, and both the federal and provincial governments. Research and a review of other literacy plans supplemented the process.

During May and June, 1998, nine public consultation sessions were held across the province, including a teleconference connection with communities of southern Labrador. A total of 31 meetings were held and nine presentations were made at related conferences and meetings. In addition, 56 written submissions were received.

During the consultation process, several recurring themes emerged, including:

- a need for government to assume leadership in raising literacy levels;
- a need for a more coordinated approach to literacy initiatives in the province;
- a need for federal and provincial governments to collaborate in addressing literacy issues;
- a need for long-term sustainable funding for literacy programs;
- a need to place emphasis on prevention and early intervention initiatives for children at risk of low literacy skills;
- a need for greater efforts at the K-12 level to enable all children to become highly literate;
- a need for increased opportunities for adults to develop literacy skills; and
- a recognition that volunteers make a significant contribution to adult literacy.

The ***Strategic Literacy Plan*** sets a vision of a society which values literacy. For the purpose of this plan, literacy is defined as the ability to understand and use the printed word in daily activities at home, at work and in the community. To become literate, an individual must go beyond knowing how to read and write to using this knowledge for personal, social, economic, or other purposes. The level of literacy necessary depends on the user and the context in which it is used. For example, as a result of the groundfish moratorium, a large number of people who had worked successfully in the fishing industry required additional literacy skills before they could participate in new career training or job opportunities. Today's society, with its emphasis on information technology and communications skills, requires an even more sophisticated level of literacy than was sufficient to function a decade or two ago.

The plan identifies three strategic directions or goals. The first speaks to the attainment of literacy levels which are among the highest in Canada. The second highlights the need for a culture which values literacy. The third describes new approaches for planning, integrating and coordinating literacy initiatives.

The actions identified in the plan will be implemented through the collaboration of all partners, including literacy groups, provincial and federal government departments, school districts, post-secondary institutions, professional associations, provincial and community agencies, industry and labour.

The Link with Government's Strategic Plans

The ***Strategic Social Plan***, published in 1998, is an overall framework for responding to the needs and aspirations of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It is intended to address current social development needs and to incorporate the means of anticipating and responding to new challenges.

Implementing the social plan is resulting in better coordination within Government and increased cooperation with community groups. Government will shift away from remedial programs toward pro-

active approaches that effect long-term solutions. The ***Strategic Social Plan*** identified the need for a new literacy plan, recognizing that improving literacy levels is one of the critical challenges facing our province.

Furthermore, this ***Strategic Literacy Plan*** will link with the renewed economic agenda for the province, currently under development. In the document, Securing Our Future Together: The Renewal Strategy for Jobs and Growth, reference is made to the importance of "acquiring new skills in a changing and increasingly knowledge-based economy." To ensure Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are able to take advantage of the opportunities in the new economy, possession of sound literacy skills is a critical starting point.

Literacy is a good example of the link between social and economic development.

"Literacy levels are lower in Newfoundland and Labrador than they are in other provinces. While literacy levels have improved in recent years, more work needs to be done if the people of our province are to achieve literacy levels comparable to those of other provinces and the world."

Literacy Strategic Planning Steering Committee

Chapter 2

The Problem of Low Literacy

Defining the Problem
Inter-generational Aspects of Literacy
Income and Literacy
Health and Literacy
Summary

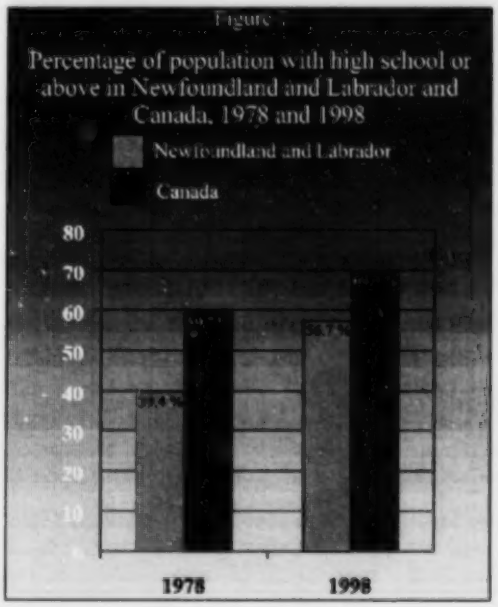
The Problem of Low Literacy

Defining the Problem

Since Confederation, the overall education level of the population has improved significantly. In earlier periods in our history, only a small minority of the population was expected to complete secondary school. However, in recent years public expectations for education and general achievement levels have increased considerably. The rate of improvement within the past 20 years in high school attainment and in the proportion of the population with post-secondary completion is remarkable. While the educational attainment of our population aged 15 and over is still behind the Canadian average, the province is rapidly approaching national levels. Between 1978 and 1998 the percentage of the Newfoundland population with high school graduation or above increased by 52% compared to a 23% increase for the whole country. Over the same period and for the same population group, the proportion of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with less than a Grade 9 education decreased by 51% compared to 53% for Canada.

Figure 1

Percentage of population with high school or above in Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada, 1978 and 1998



Moreover, recent data for the 15-24 year old segment of the province's population show that 3.7% of this group had less than a Grade 9 education compared to 4.9% for the comparable Canadian segment. These changes suggest our province is on its way to meeting and exceeding Canadian standards.

Despite this success, a number of indicators point to the need for a focused effort to address literacy needs in this province. Recent events have brought to public attention the urgency to improve the literacy levels of our adult population. When the northern cod moratorium was imposed in 1992, over 70 per cent of the displaced fisheryworkers who were eligible for the federal income support programs (Northern Cod Adjustment and Recovery Program (NCARP), and The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy (TAGS)) had not completed high school. As might be expected, there was a very high demand for Adult Basic Education programs during the TAGS years and the educational needs of this group have yet to be fullymet.

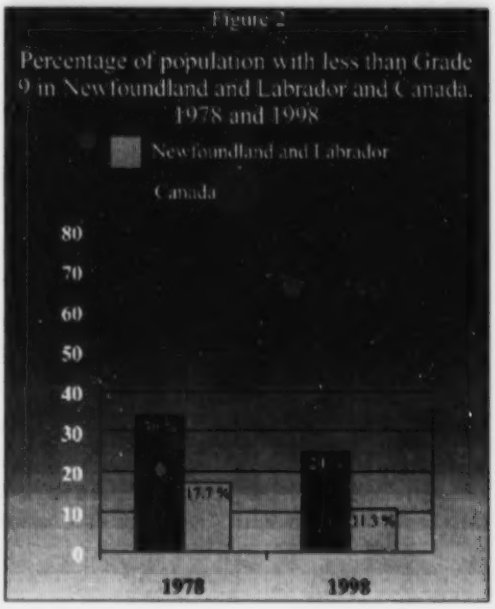
Currently, students in our province participate in a number of formal assessment programs to measure their performance. In recent years, the results have matched or exceeded national performance levels. However, the performance of approximately 25 per cent of students falls within levels that suggest they are having problems reading and writing. While the results for these assessments are similar to national distributions, poor performance is unacceptable. It is crucial that our population be better trained and educated than the national population so that we are ready to contribute to the rapidly expanding economy with its increasing reliance on technical expertise. In addition, there are significant gender differences in our province with respect to

attainment and graduation rates. Specifically, 1998-99 Education Statistics - Elementary/Secondary reports graduation rates for males in 1997/98 were at 86 per cent compared to 91.7 per cent for females.

Furthermore, according to a recent report by the Canadian Council on Social Development, compared to other countries, Canada has the third largest proportion of youth (10 per cent) with poor literacy skills.

The link between high levels of education and increased employment opportunities is well documented. Of those adults in their prime employment years (ages 25 - 54), 29 per cent has less than a high school education. This is especially significant given that work opportunities for those without high school completion are increasingly more difficult to find.

Figure 2



Further, the educational levels of our senior population (age 55 and over) are an area of concern. Currently, 66 per cent of this group has less than a high school education, a situation with implications for the health, safety and community involvement of seniors.

The link between low literacy and unemployment, poor health, poverty and crime is also well understood. Low literacy limits opportunities, resources and the control which people have over their lives.

Inter-generational Aspects of Literacy

Inter-generational aspects of literacy are also well established. The literacy levels of parents have an impact on the achievement levels of their children. Currently, in this province, thirty per cent of our adult population in their childbearing years (ages 15 - 44) has less than a high school education. Between 1993 and 1998, in this province, 3,318 children were born to mothers 19 years of age or younger. Research has shown children of young parents need special assistance to avoid later problems, including schooling difficulties. A child's readiness to learn is the single strongest predictor of academic success in the early grades and thus, in turn, a predictor of high school completion. The ability of young children to be ready to learn upon school entry may be affected by the educational levels of their parents.

Income and Literacy

Income levels are an important consideration when assessing the potential literacy needs of the population. Working age adults who are unemployed, work in lower-paying jobs, or live in low-income households are more likely to have weaker literacy skills. There have been income gains in recent years; however, average family income in this province is still low. Average family income, along with educational attainment and the employment status of parents, contributes to family socio-economic status. While not all children from low income homes do poorly in school, studies such as

the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth have shown that low socio-economic status is often associatedwith poor academic performance.

The recently released Report of the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program 1999 showed that people in the lowest quarter of the income range are less likely to complete high school and have the lowest university participation rates, 18% compared to 40% for those in the highest quarter.

Health and Literacy

Literacy is one of the major influences of health status. There is a growing realization that individuals with lower literacy rates have poorer health and are often disadvantaged in the health system. Low literacy can impact individuals' ability to understand their health care needs, as well as their ability to care for others. Individuals with limited literacy skills may not be aware of appropriate health services, and studies have shown that low literacy causes increased visits to health care providers as well as increased hospital admissions.

Summary

This province's ***Strategic Social Plan*** envisions a society committed to supportive communities, employment and economic security, and the general well-being of our citizens. Literacy is a key factor in the achievement of these goals. The need for intervention is reinforced by the widespread acceptance of the importance of high literacy levels to social and economic well-being, especially in the context of rapid social and economic change. Countries such as the United States, Canada, Germany and the Netherlands, which participated in the 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey, have reported measurable and substantial positive economic returns as a result of strong literacy skills. All evidence supports the notion that any improvement in the literacy skills of the province's population will increase our ability to create and contribute to a progressivemodern society.

"This plan proposes measures for the short term to raise literacy levels in Newfoundland and Labrador. The larger challenge for our province is to achieve literacy levels comparable to the highest in the Canada and to become a society which values reading as a personal and public good."

Literacy Strategic Planning Steering Committee

Chapter 3

Strategic Directions for Literacy

- A Holistic Approach
- Goal 1: Literacy Levels among the Highest in Canada
- Goal 2: A Culture Which Values Literacy as a Goal for all People
- Goal 3: An Integrated Approach to Literacy Development

Strategic Directions

A Holistic Approach

The ***Strategic Social Plan*** supports an interdisciplinary approach to social policy development, and recognizes that partnerships between government and communities must be forged in order to make progress. Such a holistic approach is also important for identifying fundamental issues, defining policy choices and establishing priorities for action.

During public consultations, many suggestions about specific activities which could be undertaken to advance literacy in Newfoundland and Labrador were heard. This plan sets out strategic directions to address literacy development along a continuum from early childhood through different life stages.

Goals are broad strategic directions. The following goals for literacy stress the importance of supporting a holistic approach to social development.

Goal 1: Literacy levels which are among the highest in Canada.
Goal 2: A culture which values literacy as a desirable goal for all people.
Goal 3: An integrated approach to literacy development.

While specific initiatives are important and must continue in the short term, it is the strategic consideration of these goals and how we propose to achieve them which will ensure progress.

Both leadership and cooperation are needed. Learners, volunteers, community groups and governments all have a role to play.

Goal 1:
Literacy Levels which are Among the Highest in Canada

To achieve this goal, action is required to address the literacy needs of people in all age groups: very young children, children in school, and adults who lack the literacy skills to fully participate in society. This approach will not only address the need for remediation programs for adults, but also encompass a preventive strategy so that the need for such programs will be diminished in the future.

Early Literacy

Early Intervention: Prevention of reading problems through early intervention is identified as central to a literacy strategy. It is important to provide all young children with enriching experiences to instill a love of reading and set the stage for lifelong learning. Parents' role in nurturing and stimulating children from birth is key to a child's development. Professionals with whom the child has contact have a responsibility to identify concerns and arrange appropriate supports. All children will benefit from access to high quality

early childhood programs which contribute to their physical, intellectual, social and emotional well-being.

Services which promote a holistic approach to child development and parent education have shown success. Typically, these programs are developed by local groups in response to literacy and other social needs of the area.

The Role of Parents: Research has clearly demonstrated that parents have a strong influence on children's literacy. The Family Literacy Commission of the International Reading Association views parents as the most important people in a child's educational life. Family literacy supports the learning needs of all family members. It builds on the family's culture and experience. Early childhood educators have stressed the importance of age-appropriate language and play to later literacy development. Some early intervention programs for four-year-old children and their parents or care-givers involve exposing children to school on a regular basis. The teacher demonstrates reading and other social learning activities for the adults. The Preschool Parent Resource Package developed by the Department of Education is an important resource. In this way, parents are informed about the curriculum and ways they can support and reinforce classroom instruction.

Children with Special Needs: Many children have special needs which can have an impact on their ability to learn. Early identification and support assists these children with a more successful transition during their various stages of development. The Healthy Beginnings Program for early childhood, a program of the Department of Health and Community Services, identifies all children at risk from birth onwards. Many of these children and families are also at risk for the development of poor literacy skills. Family Resource Centres, Healthy Baby Clubs and other parenting support groups promote optimal physical, cognitive, communicative and psychological development and literacy in children. For many children, tremendous advantage is gained through building on their home and community experiences with the provision of enriching learning opportunities. Children who are at risk usually receive services from a variety of professionals and agencies. The Model for Coordination of Services to Children and Youth is a framework to allow these providers to collaborate and share relevant information regarding a child's strengths and needs.

K-12 Education

Acquiring the Foundation for Learning: The 1992 Royal Commission on Education noted "that placing greater emphasis on acquiring a good foundation for learning in the primary years will provide for greater success within all levels." Children enter Kindergarten at different developmental stages. The use of a tool which assesses the developmental stages of children would provide teachers with a means to develop profiles to enable them to build on the strengths and skills of children. Literacy development at the primary level can be enhanced by factors such as quality of teaching, availability of appropriate learning resources, time allocated for reading instruction and reading practice, early assessment of problems and effective intervention, and family support.

Alternative Early Reading Programs: School districts have made significant gains in recent years in addressing the reading needs of entering students. Some children respond well during their Kindergarten year while others require additional supports. School districts have responded by introducing alternative approaches. These alternative approaches need to be monitored and assessed to determine their effectiveness.

As in primary and elementary school, students continuing to experience reading difficulties in junior high and high school may require more focused instruction. Reading 1200 is an optional credit course aimed at addressing the needs of students entering high school who lack sufficient abilities to handle the reading and writing demands of high school courses. Reading 1200 places emphasis on the student as learner and provides flexibility for teachers in planning instruction tomeettheneeds of these students.

Together with parents and others, teachers in classrooms play the key role in the transition of individuals to literate, contributing members of society. To teach reading effectively, there is a perceived need for additional training and professional development for both present and future teachers. Classroom teachers require direction in the implementation of effective teaching strategies to increase the overall reading levels of the students.

Measuring progress is important to indicate where more intensive efforts may be required. In addition to the provincial testing program, our students also participate in national assessments. While these assessments are useful for comparing the achievement of children with a predetermined norm, they are not particularly good tools for tracking individual classes or students' progress. Diagnostic information is needed to introduce strategies to enhance reading achievement.

The challenge of responding to poor reading levels of students signals a need to include mandatory courses in basic reading education for all teacher education degrees including those at the high school level. Currently, Memorial University requires one specifically identified course in each of reading instruction and language arts at the primary and elementary levels. But there is merit in reviewing course offerings to ensure preparation in reading instruction is adequate for all teachers, including those who teach at the high school level and who provide reading instruction for children with learning disabilities. All teachers need to know how to identify reading problems, what the appropriate interventions should be, and when it is appropriate to seek assistance from others.

In addition, Memorial University can contribute greatly to our knowledge of reading instruction by conducting research into methods or approaches currently in use or which might be feasible in the future.

Outreach and summer programs not only help children, but provide employment and are excellent examples of cooperative ventures. They provide a community service and are a valuable addition to regular teaching efforts. Summer literacy programs for children which emphasize that reading is fun and important have been proven successful elsewhere.

Adult Literacy

Government plays an important role in literacy development. Both the federal and provincial governments invest substantial sums of money to assist people to obtain basic academic upgrading.

The decision to enrol in literacy or upgrading programs often takes great conviction and courage and is not only a wise personal choice but also beneficial to society. The relationship between education and economic well-being, both personal and societal, is well documented.

Adult Basic Education (ABE) is a provincial program for adult learners and is made up of three levels. Level I ABE refers to basic literacy and covers learning objectives which can be roughly equated to those covered from K-6 in the regular dayschool program. Level II can be considered equivalent to junior high (Grades 7 - 9) and Level III is equivalent to high school and requires the completion of 36 academic credits in order to graduate.

The availability of ABE varies considerably across the province. Some providers have moved away from offering ABE Level I because of the greater availability of government support for ABE Levels II and III. Providing funding support to those with the highest level of education, and therefore requiring the least investment, is a wise choice since it allows government agencies to assist a greater number of clients to prepare to return to work.

Currently, Employment Insurance (EI) clients being served through HRDC who have identified their need for basic education as part of their return-to-work action plan can receive support for tuition and such things as child care and transportation. Both HRDC and the Department of Human Resources and Employment, in partnership with the Department of Education and College of the North Atlantic, will continue to support a number of case-managed clients who need primarily Adult Basic Education Level III and also Level II as part of their return-to-work action plans. However, some individuals who receive social assistance or employment insurance and who require long-term academic upgrading do not have the necessary literacy skills to be successful in ABE Levels II or III. There is a need for all partners to collaborate to clarify roles and responsibilities and to find ways to meet the needs of those not currently served.

Basic literacy services are largely supported through community-based groups or organizations utilizing volunteers. The contribution made by volunteers to literacy development is invaluable. Volunteer tutors may be the first people learners approach for help. They often form a bond with the learner which facilitates the learning process. While volunteering is demanding of people's time and energy, it brings many rewards and is deserving of recognition and support. There are many adults in this province who require basic literacy instruction, and the availability of such programs varies considerably across the province. Government is committed to collaborating with other partners to find ways to support volunteers in this work and ensure the availability and sustainability of the basic literacy services they provide.

Adults enrol in literacy programs for different reasons. Some want to obtain a high school education in order to obtain new or better employment. Others may find reading skills necessary to improve daily living. Still others seek education themselves in order to assist their children with homework or to be good role models. There is therefore merit in having learners involved in matching course objectives with their expectations, and in setting personal achievement goals.

For many learners who have been out of school for some time, formal examinations such as the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) or the Canadian Adult Achievement Test (CAAT) are intimidating. The initial assessment of adult learners should be achieved through an informal process.

It is important to be as flexible as possible in accommodating the needs of adult learners, many of whom have family or work commitments or other responsibilities. Recognizing these commitments,

flexibility in scheduling and delivery mechanisms are important considerations for adult literacy programming.

Groups such as women, people with disabilities, and aboriginal and visible minority peoples have not traditionally been integrated into a full range of training opportunities. It is important that delivery agencies are cognizant of the social, emotional, physical, psychological and literacy needs of all learners when designing programs.

The successful completion of ABE or upgrading courses is often a factor in a learner's decision to pursue a post-secondary education. While the program must be flexible enough to meet students' objectives, ways must be found to increase the proportion of ABE participants who obtain a high school certificate and/ormove on to post- secondary studies.

Seniors are living longer than ever before and although many continue to enjoy good health as they age, many others are forced to contend with some type of challenge to their well-being. Low literacy intensifies many of the difficulties linked to aging. A 1998 Canadian Public Health Association publication indicates that 80% of seniors in Canada have some degree of trouble with everyday reading demands; therefore, use of plain language should be fostered. Improving communications with vulnerable low literacy seniors can help avoid unnecessary use of the health system, thus making good economic sense.

A Culture which Values Literacy as a Goal for all People

Formal education and literacy initiatives will be effective only in a culture which values literacy and learning. Government can play a major role in fostering a culture of literacy by promoting its value in the social and economic development of our province. Examples of how this could be achieved include a public awareness campaign or making books and print materialsmoreavailable.

Literacy groups and providers share information frequently. It is important that literacy providers have opportunities to communicate regularly, share ideas and learn from each other. With advances in technology, effective communication among people from all over the province is achievable in a cost effective manner. Options which can be explored include the establishment of a provincial literacy web site, videoconferencing and teleconferencing.

An Integrated Approach to Literacy Development

During consultations, many people spoke of the need for a coordinated approach to service delivery and literacy efforts, both provincially and regionally. While many initiatives meet with success, more effective and long-term progress could be achieved if these activities took place in the context of a planned approach with partner cooperation and strategically directed funding.

The ***Strategic Social Plan*** committed to building regional partnerships. A cabinet committee, assisted by Deputy Ministers, works actively with and supports regional partners to develop processes that will make social policy responsive to local community needs and will recognize local leadership. Local groups have identified literacy as a critical issue for action.

Within government, the social plan promotes an interdepartmental, integrated approach to key social challenges such as literacy advancement. In this context, literacy cannot be considered to be just an education issue. It is an important component of the Population Health Model, a factor in crime prevention and rehabilitation, and a key component in economic development strategies.

Fostering Federal/Provincial Collaboration: Partnerships need to be created not only to accommodate funding needs, but also to support coordination in service delivery and to enhance the quality of programs. To ensure the best use of limited public funds, both levels of government must work with each other and with community partners. Activities will benefit from the establishment of clear goals, defined roles for each partner, and an acceptable method of evaluating progress.

"The plan speaks of a new way of working with partners to advance literacy. Partnerships need to be created not only to accommodate funding needs but also to support coordination in service delivery and to enhance the quality of programs."

Literacy Strategic Planning Steering Committee

Chapter 4

Taking Action

Goals and Objectives

Taking Action

Goals and Objectives

This section presents goals, objectives and actions which set out a clear path for literacy development.

Goal 1:

Literacy Levels which are Among the Highest in Canada

1.1 Objective: Increase opportunities for literacy development in young children.

Actions

a) Government, in collaboration with its partners, will distribute existing or develop new information about appropriate activities to foster literacy development. This information will be sent to parents, family support groups, and child care agencies.

b) Government will work with partners to implement strategies for early identification of, and appropriate interventions for, children at risk of low literacy.

c) Government will work with Health and Community Services Boards and community agencies to utilize its early childhood programs and services to support literacy.

d) Government departments, in collaboration with community partners, will promote literacy awareness training for professionals working with young children and families.

e) Government departments will review existing programs and resources which support literacy for young children and families.

f) Government will establish an interdepartmental working group to explore a comprehensive model for early intervention.

g) Government will explore ways to expand family literacy programs such as Family Resource Centres and Healthy Baby Clubs.

h) Government will encourage communities to work with schools to build support structures for children and their families to assist with school readiness.

1.2 Objective: Ensuring all graduates of the K-12 school system achieve full functional literacy.

Actions

a) Government will work with school boards to develop and implement a strategy to ensure children can read at the Grade 3 level by the end of primary.

b) Recognizing that some children have reading difficulties beyond Grade 3, Government will work with school boards to address the academic needs of these children.

c) Government will work with school districts,

Memorial University's Faculty of Education and funding partners to increase summer programs for children aimed at improving their literacy skills.

Increase teachers and other professionals' knowledge of children's literacy development by providing support for professional development activities.

a) Government will collaborate with school districts and the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association to provide comprehensive professional development in the area of reading for all K-3 teachers.

b) Government will establish an early literacy working group to: a) assess professional development needs, b) develop criteria and guidelines regarding appropriate courses, institutes and activities, and c) identify professional development opportunities. The working group could examine some or all of the following:

children's literacy development including an emphasis on learning, as well as instructional and assessment strategies;

the assessment of children's reading and the nature of resources required by children at different points in their literacy development;

the impact of children's social development and their affective development in reading including the role of perceptions and attitudes held by families, teachers and students; and

the identification of teaching/learning strategies to support children's diverse language and reading needs.

c) Government will collaborate with Memorial University's Faculty of Education, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, and other relevant professional associations in the development and delivery of appropriate professional development activities for teachers and other professionals who work with literacy programs.

d) Government will work with Memorial University's Faculty of Education to ensure that all teachers receive adequate preparation in reading instruction as a mandatory requirement for all education degrees.

e) Government will recommend to the Teacher Certification Committee that all prospective teachers complete reading education credits in order to be eligible for teacher certification in this province.

Ensure appropriate and achievable standards for the assessment of literacy development are set, progress measured, and results reported.

a) In consultation with its partners, Government will:

continue to assess achievement and set performance standards for literacy development;

continue development and implementation of a comprehensive provincial testing program through administration of Criterion Reference Tests;

coordinate the assessment and monitoring of current initiatives employed by school districts to address children's literacy development, such as alternative early reading programs, in order to identify outcomes of each and their impact on students' achievement;

develop literacy assessment tools to be used throughout primary to provide feedback to teachers and parents, and to lead to appropriate instructional strategies; and

measure and report results of provincial testing in a timelymanner.

Improve accessibility to adult literacy programs.

a) Government will take measures to provide access to literacy services throughout the province. Specificaliy:

the Department of Education will collaborate with partners to address the availability and sustainability of basic literacy services offered by community groups which utilize volunteers;

the Department of Education will work with appropriate partners to facilitate students' transition from basic literacy to ABE Levels II and III;

the Department of Education and the College of the North Atlantic will continue to develop and support strategies and approaches for continued access to ABE Levels I, II and III;

the Department of Education will continue the pilot project with Human Resources and Employment which utilizes the College of the North Atlantic to increase access to ABE Levels II and III and better link ABE with employment goals;

the Department of Education will work with partners to evaluate approaches to ABE delivery; and

the Department of Education will explore innovative ways to deliver ABE and literacy instruction including the use of new media distance technology with a view to increasing access to programs, especially in rural areas of the province;

b) In consultation with partners, Government will determine the type and level of supports required for adult learners, especially those who participate through distance learning.

c) Government will monitor and assess all delivery approaches to ensure programs are cost effective, of high quality, and that all learners achieve their goals.

d) Government will encourage delivery agencies to assess adult learners initially through an informal process rather than by a structured written examination.

Ensure appropriateness of curriculum and instructor qualifications for ABE and literacy programs.

a) In consultation with its partners, Government will continue to develop and update ABE curricula based on the needs of learners.

b) Government will review the structure of the ABE program and monitor course content to ensure continued relevance.

c) Government will explore ways to enable adult learners to have input into learning objectives, learning outcomes and evaluation criteria, with a view to tailoring programs to meet learners' needs and reducing the amount of time it will take to complete programs.

d) Government will continue to certify instructors who deliver the provincial ABE program.

e) Government will explore ways to deliver the Tutor Training Program developed by the Literacy Development Council and to recognize those who successfully complete the program.

i) Government will work with delivery agencies to support professional development activities for ABE instructors, community literacy workers and volunteers who deliver basic literacy programs.

Support and encourage workplace literacy initiatives.

a) Government will work with employers and unions to share information on best practices and to support and encourage workplace literacy initiatives.

b) Government will increase efforts to link employment initiatives for youth and older workers to education and training programs.

Increase support to a wide range of activities aimed at enhancing literacy development in the province.

a) Government will continue to conduct research to determine factors which improve academic progress, graduation rates and employment potential of adult learners.

b) Government will encourage flexible programming to meet the varying needs of adult learners within a structure designed to increase retention.

c) Government will work with community agencies to explore strategies that support literacy for seniors.

d) Together with its funding partners, Government will:
encourage the establishment of strategic priorities for literacy so as to maximize resources; and
explore the feasibility of directing available resources into sustainable literacy development programming.

A Culture which Values Literacy as a Goal for all People

Increase public awareness of the importance of literacy.

a) In consultation with partners, Government will develop a comprehensive media campaign aimed at fostering positive attitudes toward reading, increasing public awareness of the importance of literacy, and providing information on services and resources available.

b) In collaboration with partners, Government will develop and implement a provincial recognition program that recognizes outstanding academic achievement, professional excellence, volunteer participation, and the contributions of business, labour and community agencies to education and literacy development.

Increase parents' awareness of strategies to promote their children's literacy development.

a) Government will identify ways to enable parents and children to access a variety of early literacy resources.

b) In collaboration with partners, Government will communicate information regarding early literacy to school councils, schools, school districts, Health and Community Services regions, early childhood services and other community agencies.

c) Government will work with its partners to review existing best practices and revise guidelines for parenting/family programs to enhance or include components related to literacy development.

d) Government will encourage schools and school councils to assist parents to participate in their children's education and literacy development.

An Integrated Approach to Literacy Development

Enhance literacy development through greater collaboration and coordination.

a) Government will promote and support a holistic approach to literacy development that seeks to coordinate activities and maximize the use of resources.

b) Government, in collaboration with its Federal partners, will work to address literacy needs in the province using integrated initiatives, such as:

exploring the possibility of pooling funding to provide sustainable resources;

exploring the possibility of expanding the mandate of the Labour Market Development Agreement to include literacy development; and

working together to monitor progress in the area of literacy development.

c) Government will review the structure currently in place for the delivery of literacy services in this province to ensure it is still relevant, and will initiate strategies to:

facilitate involvement of voluntary agencies; and

coordinate integrated responses to local needs through community services, voluntary resources, corporate sponsorship, and federal and provincial programs.

d) Government will encourage Memorial University's Faculty of Education and other faculties where appropriate, in collaboration with partners, to support research initiatives in the area of literacy development and evaluation.

e) Government will work with partners to facilitate the establishment of a web site for literacy to share information on literacy programs and activities.

f) Government will ensure those departments and agencies with a mandate to foster social development include literacy development as an integral part of their strategic plans and policies.

g) Government will work with Regional Steering Committees, established under the Strategic Social Plan, to examine issues related to the identification of literacy needs and to coordinate resources at the regional and community levels to meet local needs.

h) Government will establish a Committee of Deputies to oversee the implementation of this plan and tomonitor its progress.

i) Government will ensure that a gender inclusive analysis is performed during the development, implementation, and measurement of the actions in this plan to ensure equitable outcomes.

"For this plan to be successful, it is critical that a process be established to outline roles and responsibilities and to ensure the accountability of all partners. There is a need tomeasure and report on the progress toward attainment of the goals and objectives set out in the plan."

Literacy Strategic Planning Steering Committee

Chapter 5

Monitoring Actions

Why Measurement is Important
Measuring and Reporting Progress
How Success is Achieved

Monitoring Action

Why Measurement is Important

The province's ***Strategic Social Plan*** recommends that we assess our progress through a social audit which measures outcomes as well as outputs. Outcomes include such things as our health, prosperity and well-being. Education status, and literacy levels in particular, are cited as indicators of progress. The measurement of literacy will be an important aspect of the social audit of the ***Strategic Social Plan*** as a key indicator of our society's general well-being.

While there are many tools to evaluate literacy skill levels, it is difficult to measure all the benefits related to literacy achievement. Many successes go unnoticed or might even show up as failures. An adult who failed to graduate from an Adult Basic Education program may have learned enough to assist his children with homework. Another may have learned to read sufficiently to pass a driver's exam, thus providing her with a means of transportation. It is even more difficult to measure the value provided through informal learning relationships, such as when an individual is tutored at home by a volunteer. Literacy skills lead to many positive benefits which may not typically be considered when we measure progress and success using traditional indicators and tools. We need to understand the impact improved literacy skills have on people's lives if we are to gain a true picture of the social well-being it generates.

Measuring and Reporting Progress

For this plan to be successful, it is critical that a process be established to outline roles and responsibilities and to ensure the accountability of all partners. Measuring progress is one of the critical components of

accountability. In this case, the need exists to measure and report on the progress toward attainment of the goals and objectives set out in the plan.

In implementing this plan, a number of strategies will be used to measure progress. The social audit will provide a comprehensive report card on the social health of the province and its communities. Literacy attainment levels will represent one set of provincial indicators within the social audit.

In addition, government departments and delivery agencies will need to develop their own indicators and report on progress. For example, the Department of Education, as part of its ongoing indicators initiative, will need to continue to measure and report on student achievement for the K-12 system and to include ABE and adult literacy. Delivery agencies also have an important role. They will need to develop clear objectives and set priorities for action, as well as measure and report on learners' progress.

How Success is Achieved

This plan sets out a framework for change. Further work is clearly required to outline more fully the activities supporting continuous improvement of

literacy levels in this province. The challenge will be to ensure:

- roles and responsibilities of all partners are understood;
- expectations are clearly stated;
- reasonable but definite milestones are established to make sure progress is beingmade;
- planning activities are fully integrated;
- funding initiatives are coordinated;
- fair, relevant, reliable and timely reports about intended and actual results are made available; and
- follow-up actions are used to improve future performance.

None of the changes outlined can be achieved without a genuine commitment to excellence. While broad-based commitment is essential, equally essential is the need to build a sense that commitments are followed through.

"This plan is dedicated to those learners, young and old, who are taking their first steps on the path to reading. Your courage, perseverance, and especially your pleasure in your accomplishment have inspired us."

Literacy Strategic Planning Steering Committee

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Conclusion

The costs of poor literacy skills in economic, employment and human terms are huge and it is society, business and government who are paying these costs. A study for the Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy in 1988 estimated that poor literacy skills were costing over $10 billion a year to Canadian society as a whole, and $4 billion in direct costs to business each year. The actual costs of poor literacy skills are beyond estimate as are the human costs paid by people with limited literacy skills: stress and low self-esteem, poorer health, lower income or poverty, increased criminal activity, and an inability to participate fully in social and community life. For example, a 1989 study carried out for the Ontario Public Health Association and Frontier College found that people with low literacy skills are sick more often, have a reduced life span, and have more accidents, not only at the workplace, but also at home and in the community. Literacy, directly or indirectly, has a greater impact on health than almost any other factor. When we consider the small cost of ensuring our population has good literacy skills compared to the larger socio-economic costs related to low literacy skills, we begin to realize the value of a literate population.

The benefits of a literate society are substantial. For the individual there is the ability to participate more fully in the life of the province, to understand better his or her place in the world, to develop potential, to find better employment, to assist with a child's education, and possibly to increase his or her income. For society, there is the chance to prosper, to attract and retain our young people, and to participate fully in a global economy. Many countries report measurable and substantial positive economic returns as a result of the strong literacy skills of their people. For all societies, an educational investment in people is important. For a province such as ours, where historically our people have invested their skills in a resource-based economy, an investment in literacy is essential to ensure we survive and prosper into the next century.

To achieve a literate society, all partners have a role to play. Learners, volunteers, community agencies, educational institutions, employers, unions, professional associations and government can make a significant contribution to the achievement of this goal. Success will depend on whether or not all partners are willing to combine their efforts and resources.

If we are successful in achieving the goals set out in this plan, in about four years from now when Statistics Canada reports on literacy, it is expected that *Newfoundland's achievement levels will be among the highest in the country.*

Steering Committee Members

Ms. Luanne Leamon (Chair) - Assistant Deputy Minister-Literacy, Department of Education

Ms. Leamon was seconded to develop the Strategic Literacy Plan from her position as Assistant Deputy Minister for Women's Policy where her responsibilities included the development of the Provincial Strategy Against Violence. She has considerable experience in the social policy field in her professional, academic and volunteer work, and was a member of Government's Strategic Social Planning Committee.

Ms. Cindy Christopher - Director of Policy and Planning - Literacy, Department of Education

Ms. Christopher performed communications duties for Women's Policy Office before being seconded to work on the Literacy Strategic Plan. She worked closely with the Provincial Strategy Against Violence, and has served on the boards of various community, labour and government organizations.

Ms. Linda Coles - Primary Program Development Specialist, Department of Education

Ms. Coles is a member of the Provincial Strategy for Early Literacy Committee, and has taught in the K-12 system. She helped develop a new Kindergarten guide entitled Early Beginnings and a common English Language Arts curriculum for Atlantic Canada.

Mr. BillDuggan - Director, Strategic Social Plan, Cabinet Secretariat

Mr. Duggan wasManager of the Training and Development Section, Strategic and Human Resource Policy Division of Treasury Board at the time he was appointed to the Steering Committee as facilitator. His background as an adult educator and in strategic planning allowed him also to provide valuable input and expertise.

Mr. Rick Engram - ABE Instructor, R.E.A.D.Y. Centre, Community ServicesCouncil

Mr. Engram has taught and coordinated ABE programs at both the R.E.A.D.Y. Centre and at St. Anne's School, Conne River. He is currently involved with an early family literacy project - Eager to Learn.

Steering Committee Members

Dr. William Fagan - Chairperson, Literacy Development Council of Newfoundland & Labrador and Visiting Professor atMemorial University

Dr. Fagan is a recognized leader in literacy at local, national, and international levels. He hasMasters and Doctorate degrees in literacy and has been/is involved in many facets of literacy, as a university professor, a writer of literacymaterials, a researcher, and a literacy provider in various settings.

Ms. Bev Kirby - Director, Port au Port Community Education Initiative and Partnership Facilitator with the Stephenville/Port aux Basques School Board

Ms. Kirby sits on a number of Boards including the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Cooperatives, the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs, and the Canadian Association for Community Education. She is a former member of the Social Policy Advisory Committee.

Ms. Sharon Knott - Director, Employment & Career Services, Department of Human Resources and Employment

Ms. Knott was formerly the Provincial Manager of the Labour Market Development Agreement Secretariat (LMDA) whose planning process has identified literacy as an important issue. Her work includes assisting a wide variety of career and youth services clients with accessing literacy related services and funding.

Ms. Agnes Pike - Literacy Outreach Worker, Partners in Learning Literacy Centre, West St. Modeste

As a former ABE student, Ms. Pike brought personal experience and knowledge to the Steering Committee. She has been involved with community economic development for a number of years. Her work has included a strong commitment to literacy development in small rural communities.

Ms. Charlotte Strong - Director (Acting), Corporate Planning andResearch, Department of Education

Ms. Strong works in the area of accountability and educational planning. Her work experience includes primary/elementary remedial reading teacher; adult literacy instructor; senior researcher for the Royal Commission on Education; and consultant for the review of special education (Special Matters Report).

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